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Supervised by:

Abdul Malik Mujahid

HEAD OFFICE

P.O. Box: 22743, Riyadh 11416 K.S.A. Tel: 00966-1-4033962/4043432 Fax: 4021659
E-mail: darussalam@awalnet.net.sa, riyadh@dar-us-salam.com Website: www.dar-us-salam.com

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U.A.E

- **Darussalam, Sharjah U.A.E**
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- **Darussalam, New York** 486 Atlantic Ave, Brooklyn
New York-11217, Tel: 001-718-625 5925
Fax: 718-625 1511
E-mail: darussalamny@hotmail.com

U.K

- **Darussalam International Publications Ltd.**
Leyton Business Centre
Unit-17, Etlow Road, Leyton, London, E10 7BT
Tel: 0044 20 8539 4885 Fax: 0044 20 8539 4889
Website: www.darussalam.com
Email: info@darussalam.com
- **Darussalam International Publications Limited**
Regents Park Mosque, 146 Park Road
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- **Darussalam**
Int'l Publishing & Distribution SDN BHD
D-2-12, Setiawangsa 11, Taman Setiawangsa
54200 Kuala Lumpur
Tel: 03-42528200 Fax: 03-42529200
Email: darussalam@streamyx.com
Website: www.darussalam.com.my

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- **Editions & Librairie Essalam**
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Tél: 0033-01- 43 38 19 56/ 44 83
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Author's Autobiography

All praise is due to Allāh, the *Rabb* of all mankind, jinn and all that exists. May the peace and blessing of Allāh be upon our Prophet, the Seal of all Messengers, Muhammad, his family, Companions and all those who follow him till the Day of Judgement. – *Ameen*.

It's been about two decades since I last presented brief outlines on my life and professional career to the Muslim World League while compiling this book for publication. Subsequent to the many changes that have taken place since then, I submit as updated outline.

Name and Lineage

Name : Safiur-Rahman
 Kunniyat^[1]: Abu Hisham
 Lineage: Safiur-Rahman bin Abdullah bin Muhammad Akbar bin Muhammad Ali bin Abdul-Mumin bin Faqir-ullah Mubarakpuri, Azami.

Date and Place of Birth

I was born in the year 1942, in Husainabad, a village one mile deep in to the north side of Mubarakpur (Azamgarh District), a town famous for home industry in the northern province of India.

Educational Background

I started my studies at home reading the Qur'ān from my grandfather and uncle. Then I was admitted to Madrasah Arabia Darut-Taleem, in Mubarakpur, and began my basic Islamic education in Arabic and Persian languages.

In Shawwal 1337 (June 1954), I received admission to the Madrasah Ehyaul-Uloom, in Mubarakpur, for further education in Islamic studies and Arabic literature. Two years later, in

Shawwal 1375 (May 1956), I joined the Madrasah Faid Aam, Maunath Bhanjan, Azamgarh District for higher studies.

Upon completion of my seven years of study in Islamic courses, I received a *Fadilat* Degree from the same Institute in Sha'ban 1380 H. I also received the Certificates of *Maulvi* in 1959 and *Alim* in 1960 from the Government Education Board on passing their examinations with high grade. After changes in the system of the Arabic Schools, I participated in the *Fadil* Degree examination under the Government Education Board, successfully passed double *Fadil* examinations in 1976 and 1978 with high honors.

Professional Life

After completion of my studies at the Madrasah Faid Aam in the year 1961, I began teaching, preaching, lecturing and delivering sermons. But unfavorable circumstances did not permit me to stay long in one place. In March 1963, I joined the Madrasah Faid Aam in Maunath Bhanjan as a Teacher. Then I was transferred to the Madrasah Darul-Hadeeth in the same city in February 1966.

In January 1969, I was appointed as the Principal at the Madrasah Faidul-Uloom at Seoni (M.P.). After four years, in 1972, I was requested to serve in my native Institute Madrasah Arabia Darut-Taleem as Principal. After spending two years, I was invited by Jamiah Salafiyah Banaras to join as a Professor (*Ustadh*). I was appointed in Shawwal 1394 (October 1974) working in the various academic departments till Dhul-Hijjah 1408 (July 1988).

A Research Institute was established in 1408 Hijrah at the Islamic University of Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah as "The Center for the Services of the Prophet's Biography." I was selected to work there and was entrusted the duty of preparing an encyclopedia on the subject of the life history of the Noble Prophet ﷺ, where I am currently working as a research scholar.

Books and Compilations

It is the mercy of Allāh Who favored me and provided me the

[1] A surname which is usually derived from the name of a first son or daughter according to Muslim traditions.

Contents

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Publishers Note..... | 5 |
| Author's Autobiography..... | 8 |
| Location and Nature of Arab Tribes | 23 |
| Location of the Arabs..... | 23 |
| Arab Tribes..... | 24 |
| Rule and Government among the Arabs | 32 |
| Rule in Yemen..... | 32 |
| Rulership in Heerah..... | 34 |
| Rulership in Geographical Syria..... | 37 |
| Rulership in Hijaz..... | 37 |
| The Reasons of this War..... | 40 |
| Rulership in Pan-Arabia:..... | 43 |
| The Political Situation..... | 44 |
| Religions of the Arabs | 45 |
| The Religious Situation..... | 54 |
| Aspects of Pre-Islamic Arabian Society | 55 |
| Social Life of the Arabs..... | 55 |
| The Economic Situation..... | 60 |
| Ethics..... | 60 |
| The Lineage and Family of Muhammad ﷺ | 63 |
| The Prophetic Family..... | 64 |
| Muhammad's Birth & 40 Years prior to Prophethood | 71 |
| His Birth..... | 71 |
| Childhood..... | 72 |
| Back to His Passionate Mother..... | 74 |
| To His Compassionate Grandfather..... | 75 |
| Bahirah, the Monk..... | 76 |
| The 'Sacrilegious' Wars..... | 77 |
| Al-Fudoul Confederacy..... | 77 |
| Muhammad's Early Occupation..... | 78 |
| His Marriage to Khadijah ﷺ..... | 78 |
| Rebuilding Al-Ka'bah and the Arbitration Issue..... | 79 |
| A Summary of Muhammad's Biography..... | 81 |

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| The Makkan Period | 84 |
| Life in Makkah | 85 |
| In the Shade of the Message and Prophethood | 85 |
| In the Cave of Hira'..... | 85 |
| Gabriel ﷺ brings down the Revelation..... | 86 |
| Interruption of Revelation..... | 88 |
| Once more, Gabriel ﷺ brings Allāh's Revelation..... | 89 |
| Some details pertinent to the successive stages..... | 92 |
| The First Stage..... | 94 |
| Strife in the Way of the Call | 94 |
| Three Years of Secret Call..... | 94 |
| The Early Converts..... | 94 |
| As-Salat (the Prayer)..... | 96 |
| The Quraishites learn about the Call..... | 97 |
| The Second Stage..... | 98 |
| Open Preaching | 98 |
| First Revelation regarding the Preaching..... | 98 |
| Calling the Closest Kinspeople..... | 98 |
| On Mount As-Safa..... | 99 |
| Shouting the Truth and the Polytheists' Reaction..... | 101 |
| An Advisory Council..... | 102 |
| Attempts made to check the Onward March of Islam..... | 103 |
| Persecutions..... | 107 |
| The Quraish approach Abu Talib..... | 110 |
| The Quraish Pressure Abu Talib..... | 110 |
| The Quraish Confront Abu Talib a Second Time..... | 111 |
| Atrocities against Allāh's Messenger ﷺ..... | 112 |
| The House of Al-Arqam..... | 117 |
| The First Migration to Abyssinia (Ethiopia)..... | 118 |
| The Second Migration to Abyssinia (Ethiopia)..... | 120 |
| Quraish Machinations against the Emigrants..... | 121 |
| The Tyrants' Decision to kill the Prophet ﷺ..... | 123 |
| The Conversion of Hamzah bin 'Abdul-Muttalib..... | 127 |
| The Conversion of 'Umar bin Al-Khattab ﷺ..... | 128 |
| Quraish's Representative negotiates..... | 133 |
| The Heads of the Quraish challenge the Messenger ﷺ..... | 136 |

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| The First Clash..... | 262 |
| The Dueling begins..... | 262 |
| The Descent of the Angels..... | 264 |
| The Assault | 264 |
| <i>Iblis</i> (Satan) flees from the Battle | 266 |
| The Makkan Ranks begin to flee | 266 |
| Abu Jahl stands firm..... | 266 |
| Some Significant Instances of Devotion..... | 268 |
| Makkah Meets the Distressful News..... | 271 |
| Madinah receives the News of Victory | 272 |
| Disputes over the Spoils of War..... | 273 |
| The Army of the Prophet ﷺ heads back to Madinah..... | 273 |
| The Joyous Reception from the People of Madinah..... | 274 |
| The Judgment about the Captives of Badr..... | 275 |
| The Battle of Badr in its Qur'ânic Context..... | 277 |
| The Military Activities between Badr and Uhud | 279 |
| Al-Kudr Invasion..... | 280 |
| An Attempt on the Life of the Prophet ﷺ..... | 280 |
| The Invasion of Bani Qainuqa'..... | 281 |
| The Schemes of the Jews | 282 |
| The Jews of Qainuqa' breach the Covenant..... | 283 |
| The Siege, the Surrender and the Banishment | 285 |
| As-Saweeq Invasion..... | 285 |
| The Invasion of Dhi Amr..... | 286 |
| Ka'b bin Al-Ashraf is killed | 287 |
| The Invasion of Buhran..... | 290 |
| Zaid bin Harithah leads a Campaign | 290 |
| The Battle of Uhud | 292 |
| The Army of the Quraish prepares | 293 |
| The Mobilization of the Makkan Army..... | 293 |
| The Movements of the Enemy..... | 293 |
| The Muslims prepare for Imminent Danger..... | 294 |
| The Makkan Army's Approach to Madinah..... | 294 |
| A Consultation Assembly for a Defense Plan..... | 294 |
| Dividing the Islamic Army into Troops..... | 296 |
| Parading the Army..... | 297 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Passing the Night between Uhud and Madinah..... | 298 |
| The Rebellion of 'Abdullah bin Ubai and his Followers..... | 298 |
| The Remainder of the Islamic Army moves to Uhud..... | 300 |
| The Defense Plan | 301 |
| Allâh's Messenger ﷺ implants the Spirit of Bravery | 303 |
| The Positioning of the Makkan Army..... | 304 |
| Political Strategies of Quraish..... | 304 |
| The Effort of the Quraishite Women | 305 |
| The Combat..... | 306 |
| The Fighting that Centered around the Standard-Bearer | 306 |
| The Other Clashes..... | 308 |
| The Assassination of Hamzah bin 'Abdul-Muttalib..... | 309 |
| Bringing the Situation under Control | 310 |
| From his Wife's Lap to Sword-fights and Sorrows..... | 311 |
| The Contribution of the Squad of Archers to the Battle..... | 311 |
| The Idolaters begin to sense Defeat..... | 311 |
| The Archers' Fatal Mistake | 312 |
| Khalid bin Al-Walid cuts off the Rear | 313 |
| The Weakened Position of the Muslims..... | 314 |
| The Battle intensifies around Allâh's Messenger ﷺ..... | 316 |
| The most awkward Hour in the Messenger's Life..... | 317 |
| The Companions surround the Messenger ﷺ..... | 321 |
| The Idolaters increase the Intensity of Battle | 322 |
| Unprecedented Heroism..... | 322 |
| The Rumor of the Death of the Prophet ﷺ..... | 324 |
| The Messenger ﷺ consolidates his Position | 324 |
| Ubai bin Khalaf is killed..... | 327 |
| Talhah ﷺ lifts the Prophet ﷺ..... | 327 |
| The Idolaters' Last Assault..... | 328 |
| Mutilation of the Martyrs..... | 329 |
| The Messenger ﷺ reaches the Trail..... | 330 |
| The Appointment to meet again at Badr..... | 332 |
| Verifying the Movement of the Idolaters..... | 332 |
| Checking on the Dead and Wounded..... | 333 |
| Burial of the Martyrs | 334 |
| The Messenger ﷺ praises Allâh and supplicates to Him | 336 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Five Days before Death..... | 551 |
| Four Days before His Death..... | 553 |
| A Day or Two prior to Death..... | 555 |
| A Day before His Death..... | 555 |
| The Last Day He was Alive..... | 555 |
| The Prophet ﷺ breathes his Last..... | 557 |
| The Companions' concern over the Prophet's Death..... | 558 |
| 'Umar's Attitude..... | 558 |
| Abu Bakr's Attitude..... | 559 |
| The Burial and Farewell Preparations..... | 560 |
| The Prophetic Household | 562 |
| The Prophet's Character and Manners | 572 |
| His Physical Appearance..... | 572 |
| The Perfection of Soul and Nobility..... | 577 |
| Bibliographic References..... | 585 |

Location and Nature of Arab Tribes

Beyond a shadow of doubt, the biography of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ obviously represents a complete picture of the magnificent Divine Message that he communicated in order to deliver the human race from the swamp of darkness and polytheism to the paradise of light and monotheism. An image, authentic as well as comprehensive, of this Message is therefore only attainable through careful study and profound analysis of both backgrounds and issues of such a biography. In view of this, a whole chapter is here introduced about the nature and development of Arab tribes prior to Islam as well as the circumstantial environment that enwrapped the Prophet's mission.

Location of the Arabs

Linguistically, the word "Arab" means deserts and barren land without water and vegetation. Ever since the dawn of history, this term has been used for the Arabian Peninsula and its people.

The Arabian Peninsula is enclosed in the west by the Red Sea and in the east by the Arabian Gulf, in the south by the Arabian Sea, which is an extension of the Indian Ocean, and in the north by old Syria and part of Iraq. The area is estimated between one million and one million and three hundred thousand square miles.

Thanks to its geographical position, the peninsula has always maintained great importance. Considering its internal setting, it is mostly deserts and sandy places, which has made it inaccessible to foreigners and invaders, and allowed its people complete liberty and independence through the ages, despite the presence of two neighboring great empires.

Its external setting, on the other hand, caused it to be the center of the old world and provided it with sea and land links with most nations at the time. Thanks to this strategic position, the Arabian Peninsula had become a center for trade, culture, religion and art.

Rule and Government among the Arabs

When talking about the Arabs before Islam, we see that it is necessary to outline the history of rule, government, sectarianism, and the religious domination of the Arabs, to facilitate the understanding of the emergent circumstances when Islam appeared. When the sun of Islam rose, rulers of Arabia were of two kinds: crowned kings, who were in fact not independent; and heads of tribes and clans, who enjoyed the same authorities and privileges possessed by crowned kings and were mostly independent, though some of them may have shown some kind of submission to a crowned king. The crowned kings were those of Yemen, and those of geographical Syria; the Family of Ghassan and the Monarchy of Heerah. All other rulers of Arabia were non-crowned.

Rule in Yemen

In Yemen, the people of Sheba were one of the oldest known nations of the pure Arabs. Mention has been made of them as early as the 25th century B.C., according to excavations undertaken at Or. Their civilization flourished, and their domain spread in the 11th century B.C. It is possible to divide their ages to the following estimation:

1. From 1300 to 650 B.C., their nation was known as 'Ma'iniyah' during which their kings were called 'Makrib Sheba'. Their capital was Sarwah, also known as Kharibah, whose ruins lie approx. 50 kms. north west of Ma'rib, and 142 kms. east of San'a'. During this period, they began building the Dam of Ma'rib which had great importance in the history of Yemen. Sheba had so great a domain that they had colonies inside and outside Arabia.
2. From 620 B.C. to 115 B.C. During this era, their nation was known by the name Sheba. They left the name Makrib and assumed the designation of Kings of Sheba. They also made Ma'rib

their capital instead of Sarwah. The ruins of Ma'rib lie at a distance of 192 east of San'a'.^[1]

3. From 115 B.C. until 300 C.E. During this period, the nation became known as Himyariyah the First after the tribe of Himyar conquered the kingdom of Sheba making Redan their capital instead of Ma'rib. Later on, Redan was called Zifar. Its ruins still lie on Mudawwar Mountain near the town of Yarim. During this period, they began to decline and fall. Their trade failed to a great extent; firstly, because of the Nabeteian domain over northern Hijaz; secondly, because of the Roman superiority over the naval trade routes after the Roman conquest of Egypt, Syria and northern Hijaz; and thirdly, because of the inter-tribal warfare. Because of the three above-mentioned factors, the families of Qahtan remained disunited and scattered about.

4. From 300 C.E. until Islam dawned in Yemen. During this period the nation was known as Himyariyah the Second, and it witnessed increasing disorder and turmoil, followed by civil rebellion and outbreaks of tribal wars rendering the people of Yemen liable to foreign subjection and hence loss of independence. During this era, the Romans conquered 'Adn and even helped the Abyssinians (Ethiopians) to occupy Yemen for the first time in 340 C.E., making use of the constant intra-tribal conflict in Hamdan and Himyar. The Abyssinian (Ethiopian) occupation of Yemen lasted until 378 C.E., where after Yemen regained its independence. Later on, cracks began to show in the Ma'rib Dam which led to the Great Flood (450 or 451 C.E.) mentioned in the Noble Qur'ân. This was a great event, which caused the fall of the entire Yemeni civilization and the dispersal of the nations living therein.

In 523, Dhu Nawas, a Jew, dispatched a great campaign against the Christians of Najran in order to force them to convert to Judaism. Having refused to do so, they were thrown alive into a big ditch where a great fire was set. The Qur'ân referred to this event:

[1] *Muhadarat Tarikh Al-Umam Al-Islamiyah* by Al-Khudari, 1/15, 16. *Al-Yaman 'Abrat-Tarikh* pp. 77, 83, 124, 130, and *Tarikhul-'Arab Qabla'l-Islam* 101-112.

poets who were the official spokesmen at the time. Head of tribe and master had special claims to spoils of war such as one-fourth of the spoils, whatever he chose for himself, or found on his way back or even the remaining indivisible spoils.

The Political Situation

The three Arab regions adjacent to foreigners suffered great weakness and inferiority. The people there were either masters or slaves, rulers or subordinates. Masters, especially the foreigners, had claim to every advantage; slaves had nothing but responsibilities to shoulder. In other words, absolute rulership brought about violation on the rights of subordinates, ignorance, oppression, iniquity, injustice and hardship, and turning them into people groping in darkness and ignorance.

So, fertile land rendered its fruits to the rulers and men of power to extravagantly spend on their pleasures and enjoyments, wishes and desires, oppression and aggression.

The tribes living near these regions were moving between Syria and Iraq, whereas those living inside Arabia, were disunited, and governed by tribal conflicts and racial and religious disputes.

They had neither a king to maintain their independence nor a supporter to seek advice from, or depend upon in hardships.

The rulers of Hijaz, however, were greatly esteemed and respected by the Arabs, and were considered as rulers and servants of the religious center. Rulership of Hijaz was, in fact, a mixture of secular and official superiority as well as religious leadership. They ruled among the Arabs in the name of religious leadership and always monopolized the custodianship of the Holy Sanctuary and its neighborhood. They looked after the interests of the Ka'bah's visitors and were in charge of putting Ibrahim's code into effect. They even had such offices and departments like those of the parliaments of today. However, they were too weak to carry the heavy burden, as this evidently came to light during the Abyssinian (Ethiopian) invasion.

Religions of the Arabs

Most of the Arabs had complied with the call of Ismael عليه السلام, and professed the religion of his father Ibrahim عليه السلام. They worshipped Allah, professed His Oneness, and followed His religion a long time until they forgot part of what they had been reminded of. However, they still maintained fundamental beliefs such as monotheism as well as various other aspects of Ibrahim's religion, until the time when a chief of Khuza'ah, namely 'Amr bin Luhai came back from a trip to Syria. He was renowned for righteousness, charity, devotion and care for religion, and was granted unreserved love and obedience by his tribesmen. In Syria, he saw people worshipping idols, a phenomenon he approved of and believed it to be righteous since Syria was the locale of Messengers and Scriptures. He brought with him an idol (Hubal) which he placed in the middle of the Ka'bah and summoned people to worship it. Readily enough, idolatry spread all over Makkah and thence to Hijaz, people of Makkah being custodians of not only the Sacred House but the whole *Haram* as well. A great many idols, bearing different names, were introduced into the area.^[1]

An idol called Manat was worshipped at Al-Mushallal near Qudayd on the Red Sea. Another, Al-Lat, in Ta'if; a third, Al-'Uzza, in the valley of Nakhlah, and so on and so forth. Polytheism prevailed and the number of idols increased everywhere in Hijaz. 'Amr bin Luhai, with the help of a jinn companion who told him that the idols of Noah's folk – Wadd, Suwa', Yaguth, Ya'uq and Nasr – were buried in Jeddah, dug them out and took them to Tihamah. Upon pilgrimage time, these idols were distributed among the tribes to take back home.^[2] Every tribe and house had their own idols, and the Sacred House was also overcrowded with them. On the Prophet's conquest of Makkah, 360 idols were found around the Ka'bah. He broke them down and had them removed and burned

[1] Mukhtasar Seeratir-Rasul by Sheikh Muhammad bin 'Abdul-Wahhab, p. 12.

[2] Sahih Al-Bukhari 1/222.